

Lurette teaches Muay Thai fighting

ADAM HODNETT
THE TRIBUNE

Bruno Lurette was in a clinch with the Scandinavian champion. It was the bronze-medal fight in the 2007 International Federation of Muay Thai Amateur's world championships, in Bangkok, Thailand.

Lurette fell, after his opponent kicked his legs out from underneath him. Then he was kicked in the jaw – knocking him unconscious. He was out for 20 minutes.

"My father jumped right in the ring," Lurette said.

The tournament needed someone to move on to the next round, so it was declared a "no contest," even though kicking people on the ground is illegal. The fighter from Sweden moved on, and Lurette couldn't fight for three months. It remains his only "no contest." He has 16 wins, and four losses.

Lurette's professional fighting career has seen its share of bad luck. But it hasn't discouraged him. At 39 he still plans to fight – feeling capable and passionate about the sport. After training all around the world, Lurette is sharing his knowledge with people in Campbellton.

He opened a Tristar gym on Roseberry Street on Jan. 2, moved it to the top floor of 178 Water St. on April 1, and will be holding a fight night June 7, at the Bingo Hall in Listuguj.

Start

Lurette has been exploring martial arts since he was 14. Kung fu, boxing, Chinese boxing, Brazilian jiu jitsu – he tried everything he could, even if he had to travel for hours. But he has fallen in love with Muay Thai above all the others and he goes to Thailand regularly.

"First trip to Thailand – I didn't fight. I just did one month of training, twice a day," Lurette said. "I fell in love

with Muay Thai – the spirituality, the respect in the sport is amazing. They respect the trainer, they respect the family, everything."

By 2001, Lurette was learning Brazilian jiu jitsu in Miramichi. Mixed martial arts, and the Ultimate Fighting Championship, were getting popular at that time, and Lurette wanted to get involved.

"I knew I wanted to learn Muay Thai," he said. "If I wanted to go far in this sport."

Using a fax machine – yes, a fax machine – he arranged to stay at a gym in Thailand. He flew in, and was met at the airport with a sign with his name on it.

"I stayed one month at the gym, and I trained, trained, trained," he said.

He loved all the aspects of the sport, including its ancient traditions.

"You pray, you know, three times," he said. "You ask for energy – your ancestors, everybody, to give you energy for the fight. And you even pray not to get injured, and for your opponent also. You don't want your opponent to get injured permanently. You want to win, but you don't want to kill him, so you pray."

While in Thailand, Lurette happened to meet a Canadian from Montreal and was invited to train there.

Sitcuban

Coban (The Cruncher) Lookchaomsaitong has fought more than 270 professional fights. He won his first world championship at 19.

Lookchaomsaitong was opening a gym in New York. Lurette admired his style, and contact him through email. The gym wasn't ready, but he was invited anyway. Lurette said he was Lookchaomsaitong's first full-time student.

"It's a real gym," said Lurette. "Training twice a day, like Thailand. Like a camp."

In between training, Lurette helped fix the house.

"I was also sleeping," he said. "You have to sleep in the afternoon when you're doing Muay Thai. Sleep like one or two hours – because you're going to die if you don't sleep."

The first trip was for two weeks, but he went often in 2003, and continued to go back, until Lookchaomsaitong moved the gym to Chicago.

In 2004, Lurette opened a gym in Kedgwick, and asked if he could call it "Sitcuban," meaning "trained by Coban."

Lurette remembers him saying, "When I'm going to die, at least you're going to continue my technique, and stuff like that. So he was all happy."

In 2005, Lurette went back, and fought in Thailand.

"It's hard," he said. "There's not much Muay Thai in Canada."

Aside from the sport being uncommon, it's hard for a fighter to teach, train, work a full-time job, and raise a family. Lurette admits he has a small amount of fights for the time he's been at it.

In 2007, after the illegal kick in the world championship, Lurette decided to get into mixed martial arts, for the money. He was willing, but it takes two to fight.

Mixed Martial Arts

Mixed martial arts includes all different types of fighters, at least in the earlier years. "Mixed Martial Arts" is becoming a martial art of its own, now. When Lurette was fighting, he would be matched against a guy trained in something else, such as judo – a fighting style based mostly on the ground.

"They check my video – I'm Muay Thai, with the elbow and the knee – and people are scared a little bit," he said.

People kept cancelling their fights against him.



Bruno Lurette before a class in his new Tristar gym on Water Street.
PHOTO: ADAM HODNETT/TRIBUNE

and for extra footage, fighters were asked to do something they liked. Lurette said swimming.

There was a dock, with the city in the background. At the end of the dock, some birds were sitting in the water. The producers thought it would be a great shot if Lurette ran, dove, and all the birds flew up.

"It was an old dock," Lurette said. "So I ran, and I dove ... and I see the rock and the post and everything."

He stood up in the water, yelling at the producers, with a large gash on his forehead.

"The blood was everywhere, everyone was going nuts," he said.

At the hospital, they found out that he had fractured some bones. And because of budgets, they couldn't fly him home early.

"I had bills to pay," he said. "So back to Canada – no money, no nothing. I fix my arm, and I cannot work for a couple of weeks."

Teaching

At 39, Lurette doesn't think he's too old to fight. One of his favourite fighters is Bernard Hopkins, who recently beat a 25-year-old, at age 49.

"I want to fight until 45, for sure, 45, 48," he said.

Lurette admits he's had some bad luck.

"But good luck also," he says. "I'm still here, I'm still training. I'm going to fight. So all that experience – I can give to my students."

A fight night is planned for June 7 at the bingo hall in Listuguj. Lurette is bringing in fighters from Montreal, and Quebec City, as well as other parts of New Brunswick. Members of his team will fight as well, which includes fighters from Kedgwick, Saint-Quentin, Campbellton, and Listuguj. Tickets are \$30, and can be bought at the Tristar Gym, the Restigouche Drive-Thru, or by calling 506-284-0060.

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Group wants cleaner trails

PETER JOHNSTON
THE TRIBUNE

Monica de Moss, birder and co-founder of 52 Weeks of Flight, says the Dalhousie trails are becoming inundated with illegal dumping just as her organization is pushing ahead with plans to develop them as part of a larger tourist industry.

"A lot of people are going on our trails with four-wheel-drive trucks and Jeeps and they're going back there and tearing up the trails when they are muddy," she said. "They are making big ruts. It's a mess."

De Moss is worried that some may not be aware that people regularly use the trails.

"People are going back there and dumping household waste," she said. "We've got roofing shingles all over the place, tires and household garbage like furniture."

52 Weeks of Flight is seeking volunteers to walk the trails and report on the group's Facebook page on any bird related activity or dumping.

"If you are going out anyway, why not become part of this monitoring group?" said de Moss, who hopes by spreading awareness through signs and the continuation of collaborative efforts with other groups in the area, the dumping may end.

"Their taxes are what will end up getting them in the end anyway because it's the municipality who will have to go clean it up," she said.

52 Weeks of Flight is an incorporated community group of bird enthusiasts. Its mission is to develop and maintain bird habitats in the Dalhousie region and eventually, de Moss said, develop birding as a tourism product.

De Moss said the municipalities of Dalhousie, Charlo, Eel River Crossing and Atholville have all supported the effort. She said a day may come when trails may connect the entire region.

"It is becoming a whole regional co-operative."

Patrice Michaud, director of community development for the Town of



Monica de Moss
PHOTO: BILL CLARKE/TRIBUNE ARCHIVE

Dalhousie, said the town supports the group's efforts but will wait to hear more from the budding initiative.

"For now, the only plans we have are we will go and get the garbage bags when it's done," Michaud said.

"If they come and ask us for more, then we will see."

De Moss said that with existing birding destinations already in areas of Saint John and Sackville, the province as a whole has potential to build the industry.

The idea was presented at the Restigouche Tourism Association forum and met with universal support.

"The result right across the board was so positive and even the mayors from Kedgwick and Saint-Quentin were interested in developing a birding product for their region," said de Moss.

She said birds that call on the Dalhousie region are often quite rare. Birders often post pictures of the birds they see on the 52 Weeks of Flight Facebook page.

"There is an entire network that has fingers that reach all the way across New Brunswick. People will come from Saint John or Halifax or wherever and drive up here the same day on the off chance that they can see that bird," she said.

Visit facebook.com/52WeeksofFlight to contact the group. 52 Weeks of Flight can receive legacy gifts of land or money.

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